

**Emergency Communications Declarations**  
**In the Amateur Radio Service**  
**August 31, 2005**

**Authority**

Section 97.401(b) provides that when a disaster disrupts normal communication systems in a particular area, the FCC may declare a temporary state of communication emergency. The declaration will set forth any special conditions and special rules to be observed by stations during the communication emergency.

**General information**

Frequently Amateur Radio operators have requested ECDs *before* an event such as a hurricane or tropical storm has occurred. Typically those requests have been based on 24 to 72 hour advance weather predictions and the anticipated overall damage that would result *if* the weather predictions are correct. However, transmissions *prior* to a disaster occurring are already authorized by *Section 97.401(a)*, which provides that when normal communication systems are overloaded, damaged or disrupted because a disaster has occurred, or is likely to occur, in an area where the Amateur Service is regulated by the FCC, an Amateur station may make transmissions necessary to meet essential communication needs and facilitate relief actions.

Events that are Section 97.401(a) events occur much more frequently than events that meet the standard in Section 97.401(b), because Section 97.401(a) includes events that overload or damage normal communication systems and events where a disaster is likely to affect normal communication systems, *but the disaster has not yet occurred. Any Amateur station at any time may make transmissions under the authority of Section 97.401(a). Transmissions under this authority, however, do not require an ECD be issued, and Section 97.401(a) does not provide authority for ECDs.*

Simply put, ECDs in the Amateur Service require that a disaster disrupt normal communication systems in a particular area, ***not*** that a particular weather event might result in some overall amount of damage. Obviously, ECDs cannot be issued when a disaster has occurred in an area where the Amateur Service is not regulated by the FCC.

**Where to file requests for ECDs**

FCC Communications and Crisis Management Center  
Phone (202) 418-1122    Fax 202-418-2813